

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 0967

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SUBJ: SITUATION IN PDRAND IRANIAN PERCEPTIONS

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SUMMARY: INFORMATION IN SANA'S REFTEL APPEARS TO SUBSTANTIATE CONTINUING IRANIAN DISTRUST OF PDRY LEADERSHIP. WHILE IRANIAN PERCEPTION AS GIVEN TO US SEEMS ESPECIALLY HARD ONE, WE WONDER WHETHER--FAILING ANY DRAMATIC NEW WESTERN INITIATIVE TO DIS- LODGE SOVIET INFLUENCE--THIS HARD LINE NEGATIVE READING OF PDRY LEADERSHIP IS NOT INDEED THE RIGHT OPERATIONAL ONE. END SUMMARY.

1. APPRECIATE SANA'S COMMENT ON QUESTION WE RAISED IN TEHRAN REFTEL. IN PARTICULAR, WE WERE IMPRESSED BY JUDGMENT REGARDING SSALIM RUBAYI ALI AND ABD AL-FATTAH ISMAIL THAT "EACH SEEMS TO CONFIDENTIAL

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FEEL STRONGLY THAT HE NEEDS THE OTHER IN ORDER TO SURVIVE," AS WELL AS CONSENSUS AMONG INFORMED OBSERVERS IN YEMEN THAT "SALIM COULD SACK ABD AL-FATTAH ANY TIME HE WANTS." THESE POINT TO A STRONG BOND AT LEAST OF NECESSITY BETWEEN THE TWO MEN AND PUTS THEIR RIVALRY MORE IN TERMS OF POLICY (AS NOTED PARA 4 SANA REFTEL) THAN OF DYNAMICS. IF DYNAMIC TENSION EXISTS TO THAT EXTENT BETWEEN THE TWO MEN, COULD THE RELATION-

SHIP NOT BE DESCRIBED MORE ACCURATELY AS A PARTNERSHIP RATHER THAN A RIVALRY? THE FURTHER QUESTION THEN ARISES AS TO HOW FAR THE "SENIOR PARTNER", SALIM RUBAYI ALI, COULD CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF FUNDAMENTAL POLICY WITHOUT THE OTHER'S CONSENT.

2. POLCOUNS TRIED OUT SOME OF THESE IDEAS WITH DAVOUDI, HEAD OF MFA FIRST POLITICAL DEPARTMENT (WHICH HANDLES IRAQ AND THE PENINSULA COUNTRIES). DAVOUDI'S REACTION WAS TO ITERATE HIS BELIEF THAT, SINCE THE TWO MEN NEED EACH OTHER, THEIR RIVALRY IS MORE APPARENT THAN REAL. ALL LEADERS HAVE SOME DIFFERENCES AND RIVALRIES, BUT SALIM RUBAYI ALI IS NOT ABOVE PLAYING UP HIS DIFFERENCES WITH ABD AL-FATTAH ISMAIL IN ORDER TO HOODWINK POTENTIAL DONORS SUCH AS THE SAUDIS. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS BOTH MEN ARE DEDICATED TO CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT RADICAL REGIME IN PDRY (WHETHER THIS BE CHARACTERIZED AS MARXIST OR OTHERWISE) AND (BECAUSE THEY NEED EACH OTHER) SALIM RUBAYI ALI CANNOT BE BOUGHT OFF INTO A CHANGE OF BASIC ORIENTATION.

3. FRANKLY, WE SUSPECT DAVOUDI'S IDEAS COME TO A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE FROM IRANIAN REPRESENTATIVES IN JIDDA, WHO ARE REGARDED HERE AS THE EXPERTS IN THE FIELD ON PDRY AFFAIRS. IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW TO WHAT EXTENT THOSE REPRESENTATIVES MIGHT BE INFLUENCED BY SOME HARD LINE SAUDI CONTACTS.

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4. IN VIEW OF THE ANALYSIS PRESENTED IN SANA'S CABLE, HOWEVER, ONE WONDERS WHETHER ANY DEGREE OF SAUDI SKILL IS LIKELY TO MOVE PDRY POLICY IN A SIGNIFICANTLY NEW DIRECTION AS LONG AS THERE HAS BEEN NO DRAMATIC PDRY BREAK WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND SALIM RUBAYI ALI'S NEED FOR ABD AL-FATTAH ISMAIL PREVENTS HIM FROM EITHER IMPOSING HIS WILL OR GETTING RID OF HIM. IT WOULD PROBABLY TAKE SOME PRETTY DRAMATIC WESTERN INITIATIVES TO GET THE CONSENT OF AN IDEOLOGIST SUCH AS ABD AL-FATTAH ISMAIL TO A RE-ORIENTATION OF POLICY AWAY FROM THE SOVIET UNION, AND ONE WONDERS HOW LONG SUCH A CHANGE WOULD LAST. THIS WOULD APPEAR TO BE A MAJOR TASK REQUIRING MAJOR EFFORTS BY OTHERS BESIDES THE SAUDIS, AND PERHAPS MORE CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAN HAS SO FAR BEEN PRESENTED THAT THE GAME WOULD BE WORTH THE CANDLE.

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